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An Expedient for Peace:

PERSWADING

An Agreement amongst CHRISTIANS, &c.

READER,

I Saw the World in a Flame, and among the rest, have thrown in my Bucket to quench it: Indeed I have been something in haste; but where there is Fire in the case, this must not be called a Fault, but a Duty: But I hope I have not made so much haste, or been so ill guided, as to mistake with some, and to fill my Bucket with Oyl instead of Water. I'll assure thee I drew it from a very Charitable Fountain, and am none of those that have either Respect to Persons or Parties: But I think I need not make my Excuse for the ensuing Discourse, for that would be to Apologize for doing my Duty. All that I shall desire of thee is, That before thou begin to read, thou lay aside all those Common Enemies to Truth and Peace, viz. *Passion, Prejudice, Partiality,* &c. *or else we shall both of us lose our Labours.*

RELIGION (I will not say the True Religion) as men manage it, is become the grievance and burden of the Nation, and is the proper Province of the State to take it into consideration: When the *Messias* was born, the Holy Angels Anthem was, *Glory to God in the Highest, Peace on Earth, Good Will towards Men*; but ill men, and the Devil together, have ordered things so, that the same is inverted, and may now be said, *Dishonour to God on High, Confusion on Earth, Ill Will towards Men:* The truth is, men have been so madly extravagant, in the things they call Religion, and have made such tumults and stirs in this World about the things of another, that notwithstanding I contend earnestly for a Toleration, as the only remedy to heal them, yet 'tis not for a Toleration to do mischief; and I can willingly subscribe, after all I shall say in behalf thereof, that no sort or party of men should be indulged in any of their Religions or Perswasions, of what denomination soever, but those that are ready and willing to give the State security for their Good Behaviour, and Peaceable Living. Now the concern of Religion is to make men happy here, as well as hereafter; and after all men's talk, has but two Parts, *To love the Lord our God with all our Hearts,* &c. *And our Neighbour as our selves*: But men have been so mad, that they have almost vacated both, by over zealously and indiscreetly endeavouring to perform the first; and have thought they could not love God enough, unless they hated and destroyed their Neighbour: That these things are but too true, all Christendom by sad Experience can attest, and in particular, this unhappy Nation; which like a Ship at Sea, has been long a sinking: The Captain indeed labours to save her, having found out her leaks, and call to his men for assistance; but they like madmen, every one endeavour to secure something of her Cargoe, not considering that when the Ship is gone, all is gone; and instead of assisting, do unreasonably oppose him: So that he must save them against their Wills, or they will inevitably perish.

Indeed it is a lamentable thing to consider, that that same Religion which was given by Heaven on purpose to the Sons of Men to make them happy, should by an unhappy concurrence of evil Accidents, make them miserable; and I think to find out those evil Accidents, 'tis the duty of every Man, especially of every Christian; and therefore I will lay down my Observations thereof, altho' I meet with the common fate of Reconcilers, to have blows for my pains.

Then First, I take notice men make a falſe Calculation of the Differences and Diſſentions of men in points of Religion, and call them criminal, when they are not; and endeavour to reconcile them, when 'tis impoſſible; and put too great a value on Agreements, that is, when men do the ſame things together; not regarding ſo much, the Truth, Unity and Sincerity of their Minds, as the Company, Preſence and Congregation of their Bodies in one Place, and performing a thing after the ſame manner.

All the World will acknowledge with me, that what is impoſſible to be done, is not neceſſary to be done. Now as long as men have variety of Principles, ſeveral Educations, Conſtitutions, Tempers, Diſtempers, Hopes, Fears, Degrees of Light, and Degrees of Underſtanding, ſeveral Capacities, Offices and Imployments; 'tis impoſſible, (and therefore not neceſſary) they ſhould be all of one Mind: And therefore he that attempts it, does like him that claps his Shoulder to the Ground to ſtop an Earthquake; that would ſtop the courſe of the Sun, ſtem the raging Ocean, or pull down the Pillars of the Earth; 'Tis fooliſh therefore to wiſh it or expect it, and they that endeavour it, do but vex and trouble the World; and thinking to procure, they but ſpoil all its Harmony, which conſiſts in ſo great variety of Diſcords.

It has been ſaid by a learned Prelate, that in the large interval of ſixteen hundred and odd years, ſo much juggling hath paſſed in Chriſtendom, *That the Obſcurity of ſome Queſtions, the nicety of ſome Articles, the intricacy of ſome Revelations, the variety of Humane Underſtandings, the windings of Logick, the tricks of Adverſaries, the ſubtilty of Sophiſters, the ingagement of Educations, perſonal Affections, the portentous number of Writers, the infinity of Authorities, the vaſtneſs of ſome Arguments, as conſiſting in the Enumeration of many Particulars, the uncertainty of others, the ſeveral degrees of Probabilities, the difficulty of Scriptures, the invalidity of Probation of Tradition, the oppoſition of all exterior Arguments to each other, and their open Conteſtation, the publick violence done to Authors and Records, the private Arts and Supplantings, the falſifyings and indefatigable Induſtry of ſome to abuſe all Underſtandings, and all Perſwaſions into their own Opinions: Theſe and a thouſand more, even all the difficulties of Things, all the weakneſſes of Man, and all the Arts of the Devil, have made it impoſſible for any man in ſo great variety of matter not to be* deceiv'd; And ſay I too, have made it equally impoſſible for men to *agree*, or be all of *One Mind*.

It hath been made plainly appear, that Rites and Ceremonies, that ſuch and ſuch Veſtments, ſuch and ſuch Officers or Miniſters, ſuch Diſcipline, Government, or way of Adminiſtration, ſuch Places or Times, *&c.* are things of an *indifferent* Nature, and not of abſolute *Neceſſity* to Men's Salvation, nor belong to the Being or Eſſence of God's Church; (but are things alterable according to Contingencies and Emergencies, to be retained or diſallowed, according to the cuſtom of Places or Nations, or as they are made plainly to appear to miniſter to the Ends of Peace and Charity, for the Edification of God's Church, and not Deſtruction.

And that the eſſential and fundamental qualifications that make a man a Chriſtian, and a true Member of Jeſus Chriſt, are Holineſs, Purity, Piety, Charity, Belief in God, and Faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; and our Warrant herein, is what St. *Paul* told the *Romans*, *This is the Word of Faith which we Preach, That if thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and believe with thine Heart that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved*; as alſo St. *John*, *For every Spirit that confeſſes that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the fleſh, is of God; God dwelleth in him, and he in God*: So that ſuch a belief, with ſincere and hearty endeavours to pleaſe God according to the beſt Notices a man can get, will ſecure a man his Salvation; if it will not, there is no Salvation to be had at all.

Now the beſt Notices we can get, and only Rule to direct our Lives and Actions, are the Books of the Old and New Teſtament, wherein are tranſmitted the Tranſactions of Heaven with the Sons of Men, and are of an ineſtimable value, teaching all things fully that relate to God or Men, as to the Nature and Worſhip of the one, or the Duty and Salvation of the other. Now that men can underſtand theſe Books, is a thing without all controverſie; (and only diſputed by them whoſe intereſt it is they ſhould not,) I mean men of ordinary and mean Capacities; for if not, to what end were they wrote? Or why to them directed? And why are all commanded to read and ſearch them, if they were not capable to underſtand them? And how can ſuch men who deny it, be able to vindicate the Wiſdom, Goodneſs, or Juſtice of Almighty God, in delivering his Creatures a Rule to walk by, and exact a due conformity thereto, if they were not capable to underſtand it? No certainly, the Good God, as he has condeſcended to give his Creatures a Rule, ſo he has calculated this Rule to all their Capacities, and ſo adapted the one for the other, that they have the greateſt reaſon in the World to Adore and Admire his Wiſdom and Goodneſs for the ſame.

I will allow that ſome can better underſtand them than others, and that they are not equally underſtood of all, becauſe of the difference of men's Capacities and Acquirements, and becauſe they ſhould have a dependance, and be beholding to one another, which

which ministers to Charity; but then nothing is more certain than that all men of the *meanest* Capacities, may understand them sufficient, and enough for Salvation, if they come with a sincere affection of being instructed, and of finding out Truth; otherwise they would not answer the end for which they were designed: Some things indeed the deepest Heads cannot reach, and others, the weakest Understandings can hardly possibly mistake, and those too, are all of the greatest importance.

If only one sort of men were able to understand them, as some would have it, we should have had notice from Heaven, who those should be, and how qualified, and that in such plain Characters, that it should not be possible we should mistake; but there is no such thing. And if any sort of men claim this *Arcanum* above others, 'tis an affront to the Understandings of all the rest, and their Words ought not to be taken in their own Case. And indeed, 'tis a thing too great to be trusted with any one sort of men: Some indeed will only have *Learned Men* capable of understanding them, but then if this should be, what a lamentable case the World would be in? Truth would then be a *precarious* thing, and we should have no more of it than these *Learned Men* please, and if they should be byassed, corrupted, or be dishonest, what must the other three parts of the World do? Must they lie at their Mercy, and their Salvation depend on their Honesty? No, God forbid! And blessed be his Name, he has taken care men shall not lie liable to any such Impostures. But if these men will needs be in the right above the rest, and understand for them, let them do their duty for them too; for 'tis not reasonable they should be charged with a duty, that do not understand it. But having found their own failings herein, and that they are but men like others, daring not to be so confident as usual, they betake themselves to shifts; and to countenance their fallibility, supply the defects of honesty, and salve their imposition of their sence; they set up a strange sort of Infallibility, which indeed would put an end to all the Disputes and Differences in Christendom, were there any such thing. But that which they have invented to put out the Flame, serves only to increase it; for where the Power of Infallibility is lodged, Heaven has given us no notice; which it would certainly have done, had there been any such thing: And 'tis certain, that those who pretend most to this Infallibility, have been most deceived of all.

Indeed the *Romanists*, for the most part, have drove furiously, and forced all their People to do the same thing, and worship God the same way; but this cannot be called an Agreement, no more than Sheep are said to agree, when they are drove up and Pounded all together by the Shepherd. And there is greater Agreement amongst those (though the foolish World think to the contrary) who worship their Maker under the Administration of several Disciplines, and Conduction of several Guides: For *Force* and *Violence* may make a Congregation of Bodies, but no Unity of Minds. 'Tis only a Hearty Intention, Sincerity of Mind and Affections, Simpleness and Identity of Address to the same Object, which can be called Unity and Agreement, and nothing else; for other things, though they may seem differences and disagreements to men, yet really they are none at all; for the Circumstances of Time and Place, Publick or Private, Day or Night, the several Instances of Respects, Methods and Way of Worship, are all one and the same thing to God Almighty; He only looks at the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace; Differences with men are not so with him, if they agree in sincerity of Affections and integrity of Spirit; that's the Agreement he looks after.

'Tis true again, That men understand the Scriptures differently, and to different Senses; but why this difference of Understanding should be Objected as a Crime, I know not: For 'tis impossible it should be otherwise, so long as there be such great variety of Humane Understandings; and as long as they understand not differently and amiss on a *bad end* and *design*, they cannot possibly be *Criminal*; for no man is Obliged to understand better than he can. Then again, Many men may be totally Ignorant of many things in Scripture, and yet be very Innocent; and certainly if their Total Ignorance be no fault, their understanding differently those things, which they might have been Innocently ignorant of, cannot make them guilty of a Crime; if it should, it would highly advance Ignorance, and very much depress Understanding and Knowledge. But further, if they understand them differently (which I contend for the most part they do) in order to promote a Virtue, encourage a Grace, or suppress a Vice, or any Immorality in themselves, then this difference ought to be so far from being reputed a Crime, that it becomes Necessary, and ought to be Encouraged; and they that put a Scandal on it, are very much to blame: And it must be allowed, that men may dispute things in *utramque partem*, affirm and deny the same thing innocently enough, so the *good intention* be secured, and it be to edification, and make no infraction on Charity. But the things that become *Criminal*, are those sort of differences which every side and party of Christians are but too guilty of, and which concerns them all to amend; and that is, Forcing an Interpretation on Scripture, contrary to the natural and genuine sense thereof; and that with a design to countenance their own Interest or Party. And what the Papists Object, is but too

true (though they have the leaſt reaſon to complain) that every one Interprets the Scripture to his Side and Party (and ſo do they to Theirs) and that the diviſions of Proteſtants have been principally occaſioned by every one's having the uſe of the Scriptures; which admitting to be true, ſince theſe differences are unavoidable, and naturally Innocent in themſelves, and only *accidentally* evil, and much better at the worſt, than forced Agreements; one would think they ſhould have no further to Object: Since further, if the uſe of good things ſhould be denied and prohibited on the ſcore of their abuſe, and accidental Inconveniencies, a juſt pretence might be brought in for all the Irregularities in the World.

Now ſince the *Eſſentials* and *Circumſtantials* in Religion are agreed on, ſince it has been made to appear that every one may *underſtand* ſo much of Religion and the Scriptures, as is neceſſary for his Salvation; ſince 'tis *impoſſible* men ſhould not *differ* and *diſagree*, as alſo in moſt things not to be *deceived*, one would think theſe things ſhould make men modeſt and peaceable, and hinder the ill effect of any diſſention that might happen among them.

But men are willing to admit and indulge one another a difference of Thought and Underſtanding in moſt of their Secular Concerns, but grow impatient, and are unwilling to admit any difference of Sentiments in the matters of Religion; and to their dealing on this account, moſt of the Confuſions and Diſtractions of Chriſtendom owe their Original; and after the Unreaſonableneſs, Injuſtice and Folly of the thing has been made to appear to the World, one would think they ſhould ceaſe their mad and ineffectual proceedings.

For it has been made to appear to the World, That *Conſcience* ought not to be *conſtrained*; that a *Corporal* Puniſhment ought not to be inflicted for a *Spiritual* Fault; that men ought not to *Puniſh* where they have no power to *Command*; that they cannot *command* the belief of a thing, unleſs they give a *ſufficient* Reaſon; and that, that can only be *ſufficient*, when the party is *convinced*; and that is not in their *power* to know, unleſs by the party acknowledged; that matters *intellectual* are not diſcerned by a *Secular* Power; that to puniſh men for differing in Opinion, is as unreaſonable as to puniſh them for having different Faces; that no Humane Authority is either ſufficient for cognizance or determination, or competent for infliction of puniſhment in ſuch matters; that the Terms of Schiſmatick and Heretick, are only Scarecrows, and ſignifie next to nothing; that no man is a Schiſmatick, but he that departs from a good Life, that fears not God, nor loves his Neighbour; and that no man is a Heretick, or ought to be puniſhed as ſuch, but he that teaches ill Life, or takes up an ill Opinion contrary to Fundamentals, on a bad account, *viz.* on the Score of Pride, Ambition, Intereſt, Malice, or any other Siniſter End, which will be very difficult to be known; that 'tis impoſſible for men not to differ, that 'tis not neceſſary they ſhould agree; that all Sorts and Parties of Chriſtians have been deceived; that amidſt ſo great difficulties, 'tis impoſſible they ſhould not be deceived; that Puniſhments ought to be proportioned to their Crimes; that *Spiritual* Faults ought only to have *Spiritual* Puniſhments; that a certain Puniſhment ought not to be inflicted for an uncertain Fault; that moſt Spiritual Faults are uncertain; that if a man was puniſhed or killed, he was certainly puniſhed or killed; but that it was not ſo certain he was in a Fault; that Concluſions ought not to be ſtronger than their Premiſes; that no man ought to be Judge in his own Caſe; that Reaſon, Diſcourſe and Agreements are the only Proper Methods and Inſtruments to Convince Men, and no other; that if others of an Heterogenial ſtamp were uſed, they might make Hypocrites, but no Proſelites, and that they were never accompanied with ſucceſs; that the generality of men are diſpoſed to live quietly; that Oppreſſion, Tyranny and Penal Laws, are occaſion of moſt of the Diſturbances in Chriſtendom; that fallible men ought not to call their Opinions Articles of Faith; that they ought not over-haſtily to intereſt their Maker in their uncertain Cauſe; that God's Glory doth conſiſt with the Good of Men, and may be maintained without their Deſtruction. Further it hath been made evidently to appear againſt them, that ſay, *We have a Law*——That Law cannot make a Truth; that Truth is as old as the Eternal Veracity, and ſuffers no Degrees; for what was yeſterday, will be true to day, to morrow, and to the End of the World: And therefore to force People to be of their Religion, becauſe Eſtabliſhed by Law, is a great piece of Vanity and Nonſenſe: That neither Fathers, Councils, no Individual Man, or Company of Men, no Power or Force upon Earth are able to make a Truth, or an Article of Faith. No, all they are able to do, is by way of Promulgation, Declaration, or Explanation of Truth, but nothing by way of Creation; they may illuſtrate indeed, and make Truth appear to be ſo, but they cannot neither add or diminiſh: What was Truth, and agreeable to God's Will, was ſo before, they undertook the Diſquiſition, or before they came into the World, and will be ſo when they are extinct and gone out of it, notwithſtanding all their endeavours for, or againſt it.

Again, Nothing is more Certain than that Men are Men, and Uncertain; that they are, and have been proved fallible; That General Councils have erred and contradicted one another on Record; that Fathers have been miſtaken; that what has been, may be

again; and therefore that all respectively may be used with reverence and respects as occasion may require, as the best Humane Guides and Directors; but always with deference, and an eye to their Fallibility; that their Opinions ought not to be pressed as Articles of Faith, nor their Determinations have the weight of Mathematical Demonstrations. Methinks these Considerations should make men look a little amicably on one another, and a little come to themselves: But I find they do not, and may be the Scence is laid too far off; and therefore I will bring it nearer home, and let themselves judge.

A certain number of Pilgrims were going to the *Holy Land*, had equal desires and affections for the Place, being all moved by the same Love and Good Intention; none indeed had been there already, and therefore they were the more to seek for their way; they were all very diligent to find out the true Road; and as they go along, they meet with several Ways and Paths; upon which the Company divided; some go one way, and some another, according as they thought it surer and more probable than the other; but some of the Company, of hotter Constitution than the rest, asked some of their Fellows, why they should not go their way, since they were *sure* they were in the right? To which they answered, They could not be *sure*, because they never were *there*; that they had the same Charts and Directions which they had, and had as honestly and sincerely perused them; induced by the same, if not greater Love and Affection to the Place; and that they did not think that way to be right, but that the Path they were going in, was the surer and more probable way, and hoped that it would bring them to the Place as soon, if not sooner than theirs would, and therefore desired to be excused; adding, That if they should go with them, they should go against their Thoughts and Consciences, which would be a trouble to them all along the Road, but especially at last, if they should be mistaken. This answer, though modest and very reasonable, yet was not satisfactory; for the other pressed them hard, loving Company very well, and said, That since they were all going to the same place, 'twas fit they should all go together in the same Road; and if they would not, they would take away their Provisions and Money, and force them: And their Passions and Zeal was so hot, that they did so, and worse; for some they beat, and others they killed; and for the Rest, at the next Town they prevailed so with the Magistrate, and misrepresented them so ill, that they got them put in durance.

Now who can but pity the hard fate of these poor Pilgrims? Or forbear to Censure and give his Verdict against the hot fiery Zeal of the other? But let them speak as dare: Whoever pities them, I shall say to them as *Nathan* said to *David*, *You are the Men*; All sides have been too but Guilty, and have plaid the same Pranks when in Power.

One would wonder how Christian men should have such Hatred and Animosities one against another, and run Counter to all the Principles of their Religion, and Laws of their Great Master; *Whose Lessons*, as one said, *were softer than Nard, or the Juice of the Candian Olive*; teaching all imaginable Compliance, mutual Forbearance and Charity; and one of his last Commands to them was, *To love one another*; but they have not minded the Commands of their Good Lord, or observed the advice of their Compassionate *Joseph*, but have fallen out by the Way, dishonoured their Profession, and ruined themselves.

But a man shall quickly be raised from his wonder, when he considers the mistakes under which they lie.

They greatly mistake in calling their Respective *Opinions*, Several *Religions*: I affirm there is but ONE God, and ONE Religion; and that they may as well call the several Counties in *England*, several Nations, as to give several Opinions, the denomination of several distinct Religions. We ask a man what Countryman he is? If he tells us *Darbyshire*, *Stafford-shire*, all is well, there is no hurt done; but if we ask him what Religion he is off, and it prove to be differing from ours; presently an Animositie arises, and we look on him with strange thoughts, and reckon him almost something else than a *Man*, and rather a *Heathen* than a *Christian*; and when we have made him such a *Heathen*, then we think, like the *Israelites*, *That 'tis Lawful to destroy such a* Canaanite *from among us*; never considering all this while the mans Constitution, Education, Prejudice, the Books he may have Read, the Company he may have kept, *&c.* which may make him have different thoughts and apprehensions of things from ours, and that his Honesty and good Intention may make his Sentimens (though differing from ours) yet altogether as Innocent.

Again, 'Tis a strange vanity that men have, in valuing themselves so extreamly for being of this or that perswasion or party of men, and brings a great deal of trouble to the World. One saith he is a Catholick and no Heretick; the Protestant-Hereticks say, they are good Protestants and no Papists; and the Church-of-*England*-man saith, he is of a Religion established by Law, and no Dissenter; as if Law could make a Truth; and so they go on, upbraiding one another, supposing every Division of Christians that has a distinct Name, is a distinct Religion. Now if we should be so foolish in other concerns, what would the World think of us? If the *Yorkshire*-men should say the *Kentish*-men are

no *Engliſh* men; or the *Merchant-Taylors* tell the *Mercers* they are no Citizens, would not the Aſſerters be expoſed to deriſion? Further, if a man calls not himſelf by ſome name or other, as Catholick, Church-of-*England*-man, Presbyterian, Independant, *&c.* he is look'd upon as a piece of Defaced or Antiquated Coin that will not paſs: If he ſay he is a *Chriſtian*, that will not ſatisfie; he runs ſome hazard in calling himſelf by that Name; but little or none in not departing from Iniquity: if he calls himſelf *Lutheran*, *Calviniſt*, *Zuinglian*, *&c.* all will be well, he is ſorted, and hath Fellows, ſhall be reſpected and eſteemed; but if he will eſpouſe none of their Factions, nor intereſt himſelf in their ſimple Quarrels, he is branded with the odious Name of Atheiſt, or to be of no Religion at all. And ſuch a high pitch of Extravagancy is the World come to, that a *Jew* in a Chriſtian Nation ſhall have more reſpect than a Chriſtian; and that for no other Reaſon, but becauſe he calls himſelf ſo. Should a man be ſo hardy as to leave *Paul*, *Apollos* and *Cephas*, and call himſelf by that Venerable Name, which requires ſome courage; 'tis odds but he may be called to an account for raiſing a New Religion; his imitation of his Holy Life would not ſatisfie the mad World; if he cannot pronounce *Shiboleth* plainly, and herd himſelf with a Party, there's none will take him into their Folds, but out he ſhall lie in the Fields, expoſed to the mercy of the Elements. But all this might be cured in a great meaſure, if the State would put a Fine on thoſe that call themſelves by any other Name, than that of Chriſtian. For 'tis incredible to think what miſchiefs go along with theſe New Names; O, he is a Papiſt, ſays one; he's a Fanatick, ſays another; they are Words of reproach, and their meaning is, he is an ill man; for ſo every Side and Party accepts them one againſt another: And ſome, when they would go a ſhorter way to work, call but their Adverſary by the name of his Sect, that ſerves for Evidence, Conviction and Condemnation; and then ſecure him Goaler. But it will be asked, and ought to be enquired into, How they came by ſuch falſe Notions of things? Then I ſay,

That Cuſtom, Chance, Prejudice and Conſtitution, give moſt men their way of Religion, and creates their Conſciences too; they think this or that to be ſinful, not which is really and naturally ſo, but what they ſee ſome men abhor and deteſt, and what they have been taught is ſo; and Youth generally take their Parents word, and ſwallow all infinitely and implicitly; and if one be miſtaken, 'tis hardly poſſible but that the other will be miſtaken too. And 'tis certain, that the undutifulneſs of diſobeying Parents injunctions, and the reproach and ſhame of being ſingular, and doing things contrary to their Country Cuſtoms and Uſages, are great Obſtacles to Truth and Peace. Some of the *Indians* did eat their dead Friends and Relations, and thought it a great piece of Piety, and the moſt honourable way of Sepulture; but the *Greeks* they burned them all: *Alexander* asked each of them, what he ſhould give them to exchange their Method? They both anſwered with the greateſt abhorrence imaginable, and declaimed againſt each others Uſages, as the moſt barbarous and undecent way in the World.

Cuſtom makes good things to ſeem evil, and evil things to ſeem good. And I have read of a Shepherd on the Mountains of *Naples*, who in the holy time of *Lent*, came with Tears in his Eyes to his Confeſſor, and earneſtly deſired Abſolution, in that he had ſwallowed by chance a little Whey, which leaped into his Mouth from the Cheeſe-Preſs: The Father asked him, *Whether he knew himſelf guilty of no other Sins?* He anſwered, *Not any as he knew of.* He again asked him, *Whether he was not acceſſary to any of the Robberies and Murders committed on their Mountains? Yes indeed*, Quoth he, *that I am; but this we never eſteem a Crime; 'tis a thing daily practiſed by all of us, and there needs no confeſſion for ſuch things.* By this may be ſeen what Cuſtom can do. But Education, Prejudice and Cuſtom, have ſtill further ſtrange Operations. For,

They ſtrangely diſpoſe men to be reſolute and tenacious of their firſt-taught-Principles, and make them Deaf to the moſt Weighty, Sober and Convincing Reaſons; and when a man is linked to a Party, there is no unchaining of him; he delights in his Slavery and Chains, and reckons him an Enemy that would free him: He will be of the Religion he was bred to, whether *Turk*, *Jew*, or *Pagan*; and thinks that always the beſt: Come to undeceive him, and he looks on you as an Impoſtor, and all the Arguments you ſhall bring, ſignifie no more than Arrows againſt a Wall of Braſs; he is reſolved, ſay what you will, you ſhall not move him; he will not conſider any thing that is alledged againſt him; will laugh at your Reaſons, ſhift them off, and do any thing rather than be *Convinced*; nay he comes with a Reſolution to a Diſcourſe, *not to be overcome*; and to ſay ſomething for his *Side*, rather than the *Truth*; and what is worſt of all, 'tis impoſſible ſome ſhould be prevailed upon, who eſteem all Arguments to be *Temptations*, and therefore look upon themſelves obliged by all means to ſhun them.

So that this ſort of Obſtinacy and Perverſneſs, this Partiality, this reſpect to Perſons and Sides, and want of Sincerity, and Indifferency to Truth, keeps a foot our Differences, obſtructs mutual Compliances and Toleration; every one calling his *Fancy* his Faith, his *Opinion* his Religion, and entitles *God* to all;

all; and when *God* is concerned, then they think their Zeal cannot be *too much*; and out of an hatred to Lukewarmneſs, endeavour to make it as *Hot* as they can; *ſo Hot*, that it deſtroys *Charity*, and Burns and Preys upon their innocent Neighbours.

But a further Acceſſary (and Aggravation too) of Chriſtian Differences, is the Method and Adminiſtration of their Government. For Firſt, They ſuppoſe God Almighty has appointed a particular Diſcipline and Regiment for his Church, and then fall out about it; every one maintaining that their own particular Scheme is the ſame: Then again, they ſuppoſe that *Diſcipline* and *Regiment* is abſolutely neceſſary; both which are falſe: For God neither hath appointed any *particular Way*, neither is any *neceſſary*, any further than for the neceſſary Regulating ſuch Aſſemblies as ſhall meet together to worſhip their God; or to *Excommunicate* a man out of ſuch their Aſſemblies for his evil Life; which are things very eaſie to be done, and need no great Wit or Learning to perform: And any man may be *Honeſt*, *Juſt*, *True*, *Sincere*, *Charitable*, *Humble*, and Exerciſe any Chriſtian Graces or Vertues, without the help of *Eccleſiaſtical Policy*; he may Pray to, or Praiſe his God in Spirit and Truth, (which is all the Way that ever Chriſt appointed) without the help of Church-Policy. Chriſt's Kingdom is of another World, and requires none of the Policy of this to manage it; it ought to be kept pure and unmix'd, being clear of another Nature: We ſee Oyl in a Veſſel of Water will not mix, but keep its Body intire to it ſelf, no more ought Spirituals to be mix'd with Temporals. But theſe Spiritual Politicians have mix'd Heaven and Earth together, confounded the World with their Policy, and ſo jumbled things together, that Chriſtianity is almoſt loſt in the *Compoſition*, ſo that men know not where to find it. I ſhould think that the ill ſucceſs and bad effects ſuch *Policy* hath hitherto had in the World, ſhould make them aſhamed, and endeavour by all means to leave ſuch methods, which did always rather *Diſturb*, than any way *Beautifie* the Church of God. And let them further give me leave to tell them, That if all the Hedges and Encloſures in *England* were pulled down and levelled, that it would be *England* ſtill: 'Tis True, Property might ſuffer by ſuch a Communication; but to Heaven and Religion, every one has an equal Title and Property.

And if God Almighty had deſign'd a *particular Way* or Method of Worſhip, he would have taken care that none ſhould miſs it, and prevented *all Differences* about it. But he has appointed *none* at all, as I know of, but that of *in Spirit and in Truth*. And had any particular Way been abſolutely neceſſary, our Saviour would have told the Woman of *Samaria*, when ſhe did as good as ask him the Queſtion, *How, or where they ſhould worſhip God? Whether at* Jeruſalem *or* Samaria? (For there was a great conteſt about it amongſt the Inhabitants of each) But he told her, *That the time was come, that they ſhould neither Worſhip him at* Jeruſalem *nor* Samaria; that is, not at either of thoſe places in particular, excluſive of others, *but in Spirit and in Truth*. As if he had ſaid, The *Times* of limitation of God's Worſhip is now over: *Jeruſalem* indeed was the place appointed, and particular Rites and Ceremonies were enjoyned and made obligatory; but now thoſe times are paſt, all Rites, Types and Ceremonies are aboliſhed, and other *Times* are come, that God muſt be Worſhipped after another manner. I obſerve you mind Times and Places, and particular Methods *too much*; and have fooliſh and unprofitable Contentions for the ſame, and mind Sincerity *too little*; therefore I aſſign and appoint you no particular Place, Method, or Time: But be ſure when ever you Worſhip God, let it be ſincerely and heartily, let it be *in Spirit and in Truth*, and you ſhall then be accepted.

Now men have ſtrange Contentions about the *Truth* of the *Way* of God's Worſhip, but do but grope in the dark, ſince no way is appointed: I do not ſay they do amiſs, if they mean well; but the *Truth* of the *Action* I reckon is the principal thing, by how much more eaſie it is to be performed, and more earneſtly of God required; for he ſaith, *Son give me thy Heart*. And 'tis an eaſie thing for any man to know whether he is in Earneſt, whether he is Sincere, Hearty and Real, in what he doth; whether he Loves, or Fears, or truly Worſhips God or no; whether the Affections of the Soul accompany his Actions, and that he is no Hypocrite: This, I ſay, is eaſie for any man of the *meaneſt Capacity* to tell: But then whether the Circumſtantials of our Worſhip be in a *true Way*, is not ſo eaſily found out, for the Reaſons aforementioned, and the great *Difficulties* therein. And if after Diligence uſed, (ſince no particular way is appointed) we miſtake in chooſing inſtances of Reſpect to our Maker; our miſtakes are *Invincible*, and we ſhall never be anſwerable for them: But if we be, 'tis only to him *Our Lord*, and not to *One Another*. And therefore 'tis the moſt unreaſonable thing imaginable, for men to judge one another in theſe points, much more to impoſe their reſpective Fancies and Models, with inſufferable Penalties, one upon another, when they can have ſo *little Aſſurance* they are in the Right.

But while I am endeavouring to Cool and Qualifie the Mad World by Reaſons and Arguments, detecting their Miſtakes, and expoſing to View the Unneceſſary Occaſions of their Differences, and

Mr. *Wakes* Text at St. *Laurence* and *Mercers* Chappel.

Unreasonableness of their Destructive Contentions, I am presently Interrupted with a Text of Scripture lately Preached in the City; and that is, *Contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints.* What, says some, would you not have us *contend* for the Faith? Would you not have us *earnest* for our Religion, and for the Truth? I reply, Yes by any means: And this Text doth encourage you to *contend* not only for the *True Faith* and *True Religion*, but also for *That* Faith, and *That* Religion which you believe to be so; for that is the *same* to *you* as the True, and no difference can, or ought to be made: And then this Text, if not duly tempered and moderated, is sufficient to set all Christendom together by the Ears; for every Party and Sect think their *own way* of Religion and Faith to be Primitive, Apostolical and True; and by consequence, have a *Commission* from this Text to *contend earnestly* for it: And some have acted so *earnestly*, and depend so much on the *goodness* of their *Cause*, and *trueness* of their *Faith*, that they have Plundered, Imprisoned, nay Killed and Murdered their fellow Christians; to testifie to the World their *Earnestness*, and that they were in *Earnest*; but in my Opinion, they had much better been in *Jest*, than so Extravagantly *Earnest*. Therefore this *Earnestness* must be limited, so that it be not Prejudicial to our selves, or Destructive to others: It ought to be managed with the greatest Cautiousness, Prudence and Discretion; and by no other Instruments, but those of Perswasion and Ratiocination.

Now lest People should be so much in earnest again as formerly, the Wise, Judicious and Loving Father of our Country, would put Bounds to such destructive *Earnestness*, which hath made such Devastations among his People; he would take their Weapons out of their Hands, with which they have done so much Mischief: But they like foolish Children, are Peevish and Froward, exert their Passions; grow Angry, are Sullen and Discontented, run and make their Moan to their Mother; whose too Indulgent Nature and Tender Heart, is but too much Grieved to see her Children out of Humour; and is almost ready to Sacrifice their future Happiness and Prosperity, to their present Quiet and Contentment. But what should be done in this Case, is an Impertinent Question: For the Discretion and Authority of the Father, ought to prevail against the Over-fondness of the Indulgent Mother, and the Peevishness of the Humoursome Children; if they cry for Knives to cut them, Candles to burn them, or Food that is unwholesome for them; they must be silenced, and no notice taken of their Childish Demands. So that after what has been said and proved,

Methinks 'tis the most Unreasonable, Unduteful and Shameful Opposition imaginable, which some go about to make against his Majesty; that when he endeavours to make an *Establishment* of a Toleration, and offers to put it out of the Power of any one Party to *Hurt* or *Disturb* another, and that by as good *Humane Security* as possibly can be contriv'd, they should so Obstinately and Childishly reject it, That when it has been made so plainly appear, that *Penal Laws* and *Tests* have been the Ruine, and do Ruine the Nation; and will Ruine any Nation, that maintain them: That they are most Unreasonable, Unjust and Uncharitable, and yet Maintained and Continued; Good God, that men should be so Stupid! What can this Argue, but that Heaven has no kindness for such men: But seeing their Obstinateness and Perverseness, gives them over to Court their own Ruine and Destruction; and, say I, *May the Rods be continued on such Fools Backs, since they are so fond of them.* For my part, I think to be clapped up in a Goal, to be Fined, Plundred, Wounded or Killed, on the Score of meer Religion, and for having different Thoughts and Apprehensions from other men; is a Reproach to the Christian World, and the most Brutish, Irrational and Shamefullest thing imaginable; and I think it every mans Duty to endeavour to Extirpate such a Wicked Principle.

For me to be punished for being a *Man*, for believing when there is *Reason* given, or an *Argument* which *seems to me* to be Reason (which is the same thing) is a thing I can scarce think of with Patience. I know, to Countenance such Unjustifiable Actions, there is a Black Charge advanced; and that is Heretick, Schismatick, Turbulency of Spirit, Unruly, Enemies to Government, Plotters, Seditious, Obstinate, Ungrateful, &c. These are the common Topicks of Scandal which one Party charges the other with, when they have got them under, or have abused them: They think to charge others with Faults, is to make themselves *Innocent*; and the World would cry out on them, should they not have some ugly thing to lay to their Charge, after having so unhandsomly treated them. But these Aspersions have been wiped off over and over; and it has been said, *If it be enough to Accuse, who shall be Innocent?* The Charge also has been returned on the Accusers Heads, to whom indeed it belongs: For Tyrants and Oppressors blow the Coals, and then make Wonders at, and accuse the Flame: They wonder men will not be Quiet, and accuse them of Disturbance, when *They* are their only Disturbers, and occasion of all the Commotion, by Oppressing them, and Punishing them without a Cause. *They* make multitudes of *Penal Laws*, and by Consequence *multitudes of Delinquents.* The fewer the *Penal Laws*

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are, the more Quietness and Peace always there is in the World; and those were happy Ages, when—— *Verba minantia fixo are, legebantur*——Every man might go but to the Market Cross, and read presently his Duty, what he was to do, and what to avoid. The plain Truth is, the multitudes of *Penal Laws* do but muster up, and show the World how strong they are in Delinquents; and when they see their Numbers, they take Courage, and presently Conspire (animated by their being equally Obnoxious) to throw off their Yoke and Government, that hath made them all *such Criminals*, and Subjected them to Punishment, for things in their own nature Innocent; and such Laws proves generally fatal to the Makers.

Further it hath been made to appear, that 'tis a most Unreasonable and Unjust Thing, that a King should come to a Crown, and not to have the Benefit and Service of all his Subjects indifferently: That those Laws which qualifie one sort of men only for his Service, are too Partial and Unjust; and put it into the Power of those men to do with him what they please; That 'tis not fit nor safe for a Prince to have but one Staff to lean on, or one Weapon to defend himself; That 'tis Unreasonable and Unjust that any one sort of men, under what Denomination soever, should engross all Honours and Preferments to themselves; and have all the Favour of the Prince, and only sit in the *Sunshine*, and all the rest in the *Shade*; whose Fidelity and Integrity to their Prince, their Sufficiency and Ability in Business; their Peaceable Temper, and equal, if not more probable Arguments for the truth of their Religion; set them on equal ground, and give them as large and just a Claim thereto as others: That such Discriminating and Partial Laws, do naturally tend to put the Kingdom in Confusion; and as long as one Religion (as they call it) receives an Establishment, and another doth not, that has equal Pretentions to it, *there will never be Peace and Quiet in* England.

Again, It has been proved, that Laws are Naturally Null and Void, and grow into Desuetude, and need no formality of a Repeal; after the Reasons for which they were Enacted are taken away; or when they bring so many Inconveniences, which out-ballance their Advantages. A Law, for good Consideration is made, That for the space of Ten Years, none shall presume to Kill or Destroy such a sort of Wild Beasts; but in the space of Five Years they grow so numerous and unruly, that they come into the Neighbouring Towns, and make great Havock, and destroy the Inhabitants: Will any man deny the men of the place the priviledge of killing them, and charge them with a Breach of the Law? No sure! Such Laws lose their Obligation, and ought to lose their Denominations too; and to be called something else than Laws, rather than *Grievances*, or *Nuisances*, which they really are, and ought to do no Mischief under the specious Title of Laws. His Majesty is charged with breach of Laws, for taking such *Nuisances* away; methinks they should rather thank him for such Low *Condescention*, it being the *Scavengers* Office. If unruly Fire break out in our Buildings, a Door is admitted to be broken open, or a neighbouring House to be blown up, and no injustice charged. 'Tis His Majesty's Case; He pretends not to put the Fires out of men's Chimneys, or to Cancel any wholsome or necessary Laws, but to put a stop to the Outrage and Violence of those Fiery, Cruel and Sanguinary Laws, that have made such Havock amongst his People; and if so much Power must not be allowed him, he has not Power enough to *Defend Himself*, or His *People*. But this Opposition being made by Interested and Unreasonable Men, is less to be taken notice of: And I question not, but will be over-ruled by Him, who is not *Partial* as they are; but consults the Good of the whole, and will not let any one sort of men have Power to Oppress the rest. But then again, as to our Differences:

I am utterly against reconciling of them by such Methods, which some men take; and am indifferent whether they be reconciled or no; so they may be made *Harmless* and *Easie* to the Publick: And I do protest, I cannot see so much *Iniquity* in them, as some would perswade; and hardly know how to call them *Differences*, but observe more their *Agreement* than their *Difference*. For all do mutually *agree* to Worship the same Eternal Ever-Living God, and believe in his Ever-Blessed Son Jesus Christ. The *Differences* I most observe, are *Men's Differences*, and mutual Animosities about *Differences*. And I affirm, the *first Differences* in the various modes of Worship, are mostly *Innocent*; but the *second Differences* are Criminal; that is, men's differing one with another, and inflicting Punishments one upon another about them; and breaking the Bonds of Charity; hating and denying Communion one to another, on the score of any way of Worship, *differing* from theirs, though altogether as Innocent.

And what I have said before, is not with a Design to make all Men to be of one and the same Mind to have the same Thoughts and Apprehensions of things; to agree and perform the same things, after the same Manner and Method, as some Men are over-fond of, and lay out all their endeavours (but to no purpose) to bring to pass; for this is neither *possible* nor *necessary*; and therefore do rather incourage honest and *sincere Differences*, than such forced and *Hypocritical Agreements*: For what signifies a Congregation and Presence of Bodies, when there is a

dissent

dissent and absence of Minds? 'Tis the Unity of Minds makes the Agreement; and though Company and Universality may seem fine and plausible things to men, yet they cannot be pleasing in the sight of God, if accompanied with Error or Hypocrisie, which are generally the Concomitants of *pack'd Agreements*: But we know that he is well pleased with our sincerity and good intentions; and will rather Pity than Punish, our unwilling and unfortunate mistakes, in our various and differing Methods and Instances of Respect unto him. But my design is from the *Impossibility* of men's Agreement, about the things they contend, from the *Innocency* of their first Differences, from the Folly and Vanity of their Contention; all aiming at, and designing the same things, *viz. The Salvation of their own Souls, and the Glory of God*; to perswade men to calm, quiet and soften their Minds, and to convince them of the Unreasonableness of their Mutual Severities and Impositions, and to dispose them to Mutual Compliances and Charity: Also I would discountenance, as much as possible, the foolish and vain Attempts of those Men, who with all the Art and Industry imaginable, do endeavour to make the World all of *One Mind*; & are impatient of any Contradiction and Dissent. 'Tis strange that the Experience of so many Ages should not School them into a better Understanding; let them quote the Age wherein they all agreed: Has there not been Father against Father, Council against Council, a continuation of Changes and Innovations? And have we not transmitted to us a Black List of Heresies and Schisms, (as men call them?) And 'tis possible they may quote an Universal Force and Tyranny, but never an Universal Agreement. But why should I go on? These are things past Contradiction, &c. And what hopes is there now to make Men all of *One Mind*, more than formerly? Have we not *Their* Difficulties, and our *Own* too, to contend with? And to say true, we have nothing handed down certain, and not subject to dispute, but the Good Being we adore, and his only begotten Son, in whom we believe. These things indeed are Universally Credited amongst us, and not disputed by any. But all other things do, and may challenge a Dispute, since they have passed through so many differing Hands, and served so many different Interests and Parties. Indeed some Records I reckon more Authentick than others, I mean those that teach and instruct us in the ways of Peace and Holy-Living; but in general, all lie more or less liable to exception. For they have been managed by men of various and differing Understandings, Passions, Humours, Constitutions and Interests. And have we not the same sort of men? And is not the World governed by the same Methods and Politicks as formerly? We see every party quote Scripture, and Fathers and Councils one against another. But to what purpose? For none of them at this time of the day, after the Revolution of so many years, are competent or sufficient to decide our Differences: Every Age brings up Men of Prudence and Discretion enough to govern themselves; and what the Fathers did is not to be drawn down for a President for these Time: They lived in Ages wherein their Civil Customs were different from ours; and their Civil Customs may as well be imposed on us, as their Ecclesiastical; their Civil Customs did influence their Ecclesiastical, and so doth ours; and that increases the difficulty: Besides, they were but *Men*, and so are *We*: They were *Good Men* indeed, and lived Holy Lives, and were Ornaments to their respective Generations; and as such we ought to respect them. But there is too much reverence paid to Antiquity by some; and they are apt to draw very weak Conclusions; and say, *Such a Father said such a thing; Ergo*, 'tis true; and think this way of Arguing is Good and Authentick; never considering the Truth and Reasonableness of the Thing, so much as the Authority of the Man. But further, passing over the Iniquity of the Times, and the Corruptions which they may have undergone; and supposing them to be all truly transmitted to us, yet they will signifie very little at best, since every Disputer and Party is to manage them: They will speak any thing we would have them to speak; and are Weapons in the Hands of every one that pleases to take them: And nothing is more common than to hear all Sides and Parties say, *They have Reason, Scriptures, Fathers and Councils on their Side*; but this signifies nothing at all, because they must not be Judges in their own Case. Indeed they signifie, as to particular men for instruction and direction in Holy Living; and give Excellent Councel and Advice, and minister to Holiness and Piety, but will decide few of our Controversies, since Parties must manage them. 'Tis certain that Law, Scripture, Argument and Reason, signifies little amongst Disputers; each Party calling that *Law*, which doth serve their *Turn*; that *Scripture*, which doth seem to countenance their *Opinion*; and that *Reason* and good *Argument*, which favours and tends to promote their *Design*; and not what *really* are so: And this misery will still be continued in the World, as long as we have several Interests to manage; several Parties, and so few (if any) indifferent, and impartial Judges amongst us; and all things will suffer Aggravation or Extenuation, be great or little, good or bad; according as they quadrate with mens Opinions, Prejudices or Interests. But supposing men to be Impartial, Diligent and Honest, yet 'tis impossible they should not differ in their Sentiments, since their Understandings

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are so various: And some understand more, some less than is meant; some Figuratively, some Literally, some Relatively, others Collectively, Distributively, Privitively, Positively, Affirmatively, Negatively, and a hundred other ways, to the *wearying* and *wearing out* of all the Adverbs; Witness all those numerous and large Comments and Explications on Law and Gospel, both by Ancient and Modern Expositors, most differing one from the other, though on the same Texts; according to the Capacities, differing Acquirements, Educations, Prejudices, or Prior Notions of the Managers, all which add to the Difficulties of Mens Agreement. Then again, Affection being founded in Likeness; the various Authors find Abetters, according as they find Readers of the same Humour and Constitutions: One loves such a Book, and such a Man; and saith, What he writes is certainly the Truth and Right; and why? Not that it really is so; but because he writes something suitable to his Genius and Complexion: The Sanguine loves the Chearful and Encouraging; the Melancholy, the most Doleful and Tragical Exposition; and most call that which *pleases them*, the *Truth*.

But further, Let them tell me what good they have done, by such their Endeavours of Uniting Men, as they call it? Have they not raised more Devils than they can lay? Has not one Book begot another, and one Dispute another? And so *like* is *Truth* to *Falshood*, and *one thing* to *another*; and there be so many Plausibilities and Probabilities, the Wisest and most Considering Man may be deceived; and so by Consequence this Humour of Disputing propagated to the end of the World; which instead of Curing and Healing Differences, doth but enlarge the Breaches, and increase them, by *raising* Mens Passions, and *destroying* Charity. As to *publick* Disputes, 'twas hardly ever known but they that had most Power, and the largest Interest, always went away with the Victory. And as for *private*, I scarce ever knew two Persons engaged in a Dispute, but that both came off *worse*, though both got the *better*: The *love* of Victory on one hand, and the *shame* of being overcome on the other; their Passion and Indiscreet Zeal, their Weakness or Interest, hath made them so obstinate and resolute, and put them on such Shifts and Artifices, that have made them come off worse Men, I am sure *worse Christians*.

Since then it must be allowed me, that 'tis impossible the World should agree, or be all of *one Mind* in matters of Religion, and no means found *competent* to make them so; to what end then do Men Dispute? Do they think to Unite the Poles, or reconcile Contradictions? Indeed their Endeavours may be pitied, because they mean well; but not at all to be commended. But to speak Truth, they have seen the impossibility of their Attempt long ago, and therefore laid their Heads together for an Expedient to salve all. Hence came the concern of *Infallibility a poor shift* indeed, which hath made all things worse than they were before; and has been so often baffled, and is such a ridiculous thing, so much against the Experience of all Mankind, that Laughing at it is the best way of Arguing. And to my Apprehension, the more Certain and Infallible Truth, of the *Impossibility of Agreement*, is a much better *Expedient* to charm the mad World into an Agreement, than that of Infallibility: For when after so much Experience, and so many Attempts made, Men find the *impossibility* of Agreement; methinks they should at last agree; that is, they should yield themselves Vanquished; see their Faults and Vanity of Contention, be induced to be at Peace one with another; cease their mutual Violence and Severity, and Amicably turn all into mutual Love, Compliance and Charity. And when the *Romanists* boast of their *Agreement* and *Infallibility*, and object it to the *Protestants*, that they cannot agree; I would have them tell them again, that 'tis *impossible* to agree, nor is it *necessary*; and that it is no Crime to *disagree* in their Sense. Also that their *Agreement*, however they may boast, is no *Agreement*; that the *Fagots* may as well be said to *agree*, when they are bound up together, or *Sheep* when drove up together and pounded in their Folds; and that it is rather a Combination, or any thing in the World, more proper than an Agreement.

And let me ask the World the Question, Where the Harm would be, if Men Worship their Maker in their *own* way; and have various and different Apprehensions of Things; if all their respective Opinions and Sentiments be secured from having *ill Effects* on the Publick, and from disturbing one another? What is that to me, if a Man think a Tree to be a Man, or a Man to be a Beast; if a Man so mistaught and apprehended, be secured from being baited or worried? We are all to answer to one common Lord and Master; *He* is to be our Judge, if we have served him not right: Indeed, I look on it as my Duty to inform my Neighbour, and instruct him, if he be out of the way, if I think *my way* the better, and more pleasing to my Maker. But then, since *I* may be mistaken, and out of the way, and *he* in the right way, my method with him ought to be no other than Reason and Discourse; and that in the most moderate and discreet way I can. For if I should do otherwise, I may bring a *greater* Inconvenience on him, than *that* I pretend to Regulate.

But again, As to the innocency of Differences, why should any Man be esteemed a Criminal, or punished

nished as such, whose Desires and Intentions are to please his Maker as well as mine? We see all Rivers, little and great, at last discharge themselves into the Ocean; and all Divisions and Sects of Christians have the same End and Tendency, and Terminate in the same Center, *viz.* in endeavouring to Please, to Glorifie and Honour their Maker. Why therefore should the distinct Ways and Methods in Spirituals, be more a Reproach than those in Temporals; and Men not to be allowed to choose for themselves their Method in obtaining a Mansion in another World, as well as securing a Possession in this? Their own Souls lies at stake, which if they have any apprehensions of, must needs oblige them to be sincere. But this interposing in other Mens Matters, and being over-Officious, I like not; and they that force their own Inventions and Models of Worship on other Men, under the specious pretences of *Right* and *Truth*, do (I am afraid) *force a Trade* rather than Truth, which stands in need of no *Coercion*. And indeed there is such a mysterious *Trade* driven in the Concerns of Religion, and so much Gain gotten by some particular Methods, that 'tis no wonder Men *contended so earnestly* for them.

And amongst other hindrances of true Holiness, and Christian Affection, and of the Establishment of Truth and Peace among us, are the *Dignities*, *Honours*, and *large Revenues* of *Spiritual Men*: And I beg some Gentlemens *Pardon* if I think amiss, when I say I believe the *Flames of Contention* that are afoot, and so much disturb Christendom, would *cease* and abate, were the Oily Substance of *their fat Benefices* a little diminished or taken away: And that a great many Men would not think it worth their while to contend so about the *invisible* things of *another* World, were there not a great deal to be gotten in *this*. But in order to a Conclusion:

We may hope and wish Truth and Peace to flourish in the World, but we never shall see it, as long as Temporals are so mixt with Spirituals: There will never be a prosperous or blessed Issue of such an unhallowed and unsanctified mixture. But when there is a *Divorce* put to *these*, and all Power of the Church be devolved on the State; and the Men be chosen in *another manner*, and their *Allowances* setled on them by the State; and when Learning is better managed and reformed. For the Poet saith but too true,

——Whatsoever ill the State invades,
The Pulpit either forces or perswades;
Others may bring the Fewel to the Fire,
But they the Breath which makes the Flame aspire.

And that was but an unlucky sort of Comment, which one made of those Words wrote over the Head of our Saviour by *Pilate*, in *Hebrew*, *Greek* and *Latin*, That he should be persecuted most by men skilfull in those Languages: For 'tis the Learned men are the Warriers, and manage all our Contentions; they would in a manner naturally Disband, had they not such Leaders, who have little else to do but to raise unnecessary Quarrels, and set the World together by the Ears. The other three parts of the World have *little* leasure, and *less* will and abilities to maintain them; I say when Learning is better managed, and when a perfect and unalterable Toleration of all Perswasions in Religion is established, then the Eternal God will bless the World with Truth and Peace; but 'tis only the last, I mean Toleration, which we at present may expect, and that for the Reasons aforementioned; as also for the unvaluable Benefits hereafter we shall certainly reap thereby. For in particular,

What can more contribute to the Security, Prosperity and Flourishing State of this Unhappy Nation, than by one joint and Universal Act, to Abolish all those Grievances which have so long disturbed our Peace? I mean *Penal Laws* and *Tests*; and at the same time to Settle and Establish a *Great Pacifick Charter*, that Hell it self, nor all the United Force of Malicious Men shall never be able to disturb: Wherein every one cannot fail to find their Account, except those who are not fit to be quieted or contented, because they will not be satisfied with their proportion of Power, or good Livings, but demand all. But leaving such unreasonable men to be managed into Compliance, by that Power, which I hope will do it effectually, I promise my self, that all the rest will not betray so much Weakness, as not to acquiesce in such a *Sovereign Expedient*, which will certainly redound to the good of the whole. For hereby every one will have his Religion secured to him, by as good a Title as his Land; every one will be secured from the Destructive and Fiery Zeal of his Violent Neighbour: And since *humanum est errare*, and Mistakes and Errors will be, as long as there be men; yet this *Great Charter* will protect all from the evil of one anothers mistakes; and will put an end to mens ruining and killing one another for God's sake; will make the *Lyon lie down with the Lamb, and silence the voice of Complaints in our Streets*; will check the Insolence and Ill Nature of Perverse Men, of all sides; and let men Worship their Maker sincerely and truly, and prevent Hypocrisie; will make His Majesty's Government easie, and prevent Factions, Plots and Conspiracies against it; will give Him leave to exert His Royal Vertues, and make as considerable a Figure in Christendom as any of His Ancestors; will take away

away all the pretensions ill men may have from Coercion and Restraint, and leave them inexcusable if Turbulent and Unquiet; so that none dare endeavour to Patronize them, or mitigate their Condign Punishment: Will lay asleep all Fears and Jealousies, and quiet the Passions and Animosities of men, or at least make them Impotent and Uncapable of doing Hurt. And in fine, that by its Provisions and Sanctions, will qualifie things so, that men of all Perswasions shall have an equal Claim and Title to Religion, Property, and their Princes Favour: and that no publick Emoluments, no Office, Interest, Benefit, Favour or Preferment, shall be denied to any man, on the accounnt of his Perswasion; but purely on some Notorious *Wicked Incapacity*. And further, by its *Pacifick Nature* will gradually effect, that the present odious malignity affixed to the distinguishing Names of Christians, shall be mortified and made innocent; and to go under several different Denominations, shall be no more a Reproach to them, than it is for Citizens to be free of several Companies; or Country-men to be called by the Name of the County they were born in. But in answer to some Objections.

If it be alledged, *That the Papists ought not to have the Benefit of Toleration, because of their Wickedness*: To this I answer, The same Argument holds good against any Side or Party; for they have been *all* wicked by Turns, when in Power, and have been pretty even one with another; and so, I think, have the greatest Reason to agree: Besides, if we stay, and will admit of no Religion to receive an Establishment, till its Professors have cleared themselves of all *Real* Crimes, or *pretended* ones; I am afraid we shall have no Religion at all: For all Sides have been really to Blame, and really Criminal, though every Side endeavour to Extenuate their Guilt; but being Parties, must not be Judges in their own Case. Their denying their Faults, does not make them less guilty, though some men think so; and by an odd sort of Inference, they reckon to make another man a Criminal, is to make themselves Innocent. And the principal thing urged in their Discourse is, To *magnifie* others Faults, and *lessen* their own. And this humour is so Epidemical, I meet it almost every where; and if they can prove, or make out any way, the Perswasion of another to be *absurd* or *odd*, they look upon themselves to be very good Christians; never considering how easie a thing it is to make any thing *absurd*; nor what different ways of Falshood there are; in some of which 'tis ten to one, but they themselves may Tread.

But to come to a more ingenuous Confession, and as an Indifferent Person to *speak* the Truth, and give all Sides their due; I protest I cannot in Conscience vindicate any Parties proceedings. The *Papists* have Faults enough, and the World is Inquisitive to find out more; (not to mention the misrepresentations and foul charges, which is inseparable to disputing Parties:) Nor are the *Protestant* Dissenters innocent, but in many things must acknowledge they have sadly miscarried; especially in those late unhappy troubles, in the Reign of King *Charles* I. Much less is the Church of *England* to be excused, who by their Severities and Pressures of Government, gave but too great provocations to both; and their *Furious Driving* like *Jehu*, is the principal Cause of most of our Troubles. They were the occasion of the *Scots* Rebelling, Arch-Bishop *Laud* imposing the *Common-Prayer* upon them, (contrary to the Constitution of their Nation) and of the *English* former and late Rebellions, by laying such Loads on *Dissenters, which they would not help to bear with the least of their Fingers*; but most of all to blame by establishing *Iniquity by Law*; and after so much *mischief* done thereby, yet *vindicate* the same Law still, and by Consequence their Wicked Proceedings. In Calm Fits and Sober Hours, they confess their former ill Treatment by *Dissenters* has made them over-act themselves of Late. And why will not they allow this to be a good Plea in the Mouths of others, who over-acted themselves too in their *late* and *former* Outrages; resenting too deeply and unchristianly their Ill Usage and Oppression? Tyranny and Oppression is the Original and Source of most violent Outrages; and when-ever the Banks are pull'd down, the Current runs with the greatest Impetuosity.

'Tis well known the *Papists* have had but miserable Treatment in *England*, ever since the Reformation, but especially since Queen *Mary*'s time; and 'tis known as well that the *Dissenters* have had little better: And no wonder therefore that they have plotted and been troublesome to them that have kept them *under*: and the Church of *England* too, when under Hatches by the *Dissenters*, were Plotters to bring themselves (though they called it the *King*) in again: Indeed they have not had so many *Temptations* as others; for since the Reformation they have been mostly Regent, and in the Sunshine: I shall not further object against them, what their Enemies have objected; but say they begin to shew themselves Men, and exactly like other Men too, they grow angry and discontented; sometimes Threaten, sometimes Flatter, then Reflect, start Jealousies, and raise Bugbears; and use all the little Shifts and Artifices which their reputed Enemies, in much worse Circumstances, formerly used; and then were objected to them as Crimes. So that in Conclusion, after all the noise and talk of Loyalty, and good Principles, by every Party, I find *none* of them good, but when they

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re pleased (which they say the Devil is) and *none* much worse than another, but when they are are *provoked*.

But here, I know, will come in an Objection, and that is, *That the Papists by their Principles are so far from thinking it a sin to destroy their Innocent Neighbours, (which are Heretcks, as they call them) that they think it matter of Merit and Duty so to do.* Here is an Objection with a Witness.

——— Pudet hæc opprobria nobis,
Et dici potuisse, & non potuisse refelli.

If this could be prov'd, (which I never yet saw) and if they clear not themselves from this, and give the World satisfaction; I am so far from *extenuating* such a wicked Principle, that I think what Opposition their *Adversaries* have *already*, or hereafter *may* make against them, is all but *too little*; and I think it my Duty, and ought to be the Duty of every Honest Man, to extirpate such a Race of Men from the face of the Earth; and to respect them as a sort of wild Beasts, that would devour and Prey upon Mankind. God forbid I should argue for such a sort of Men. What I argue for, is only for an Indulgence of Thought in things of an indifferent Nature, and Principles which terminate in Speculation, and produce no *wicked Action*. And I *here* declare again, as at first, That 'tis an unreasonable thing, that any sort of Men, under what Denomination soever, should have the *benefit* of any Government, much less be admitted as a Member, or Administrator in it, unless he do his endeavour to *Encourage* and *Protect* it, and give Security for his quiet and peaceable Living under it.

But then as our Saviour commended the *Unjust Steward*, so I cannot but commend all our Parties, and must needs say *They do wisely in their Generation*, abating their Honesty and Integrity. For to begin with the Church of *England*; Her Sons Act as Prudently as can be imagined; for they have got all into their own hands, all the Spiritual Preferments in the Nation; if *any* of them should turn *Papists*, that is madness, for they have got *all* already; and the *Papists* have *nothing* to give them: *They* know, that if either they move to the Right Hand, or the Left, they shall be *Lessened*, since they are craving needy People on both Sides them: Therefore *their Interest* consists in being obstinate, and standing out against the Kings Demands: They may be made *less*, but cannot be made *greater*: Therefore by all means possible they endeavour to keep those under that would come in Snacks with them; also on the score of their Abuse, for they are Conscious of the Injury they have done, and are afraid of *Retaliation*.

Then as they cannot be blamed to keep their Wealth and Power; so on the other hand the Endeavours of others must not be blamed in getting what they can: And, who in Conscience or Equity can *accuse* them, who being Poor, Indigent, and ready to be Starved, do endeavour to supply their Wants, and come in Partners with the Possessors? 'Tis natural for every Man that has been Oppressed, to rid himself of his Yoke, and endeavour to secure himself for the future; and that Man deserves to be hang'd, who standing condemn'd by an unjust Law, and gets a Reprieve, will not endeavour to get so unjust a Law to be Repealed. But then the Injustice of the first, or the irregularity of the Methods of the Last, I cannot consent to commend. And it grieves me to consider, how *Religion* is made a Stalking-Horse; and is taken up for a Pretence and Cloak to cover Mens base Designs; and indeed as far as ever I could observe, *two thirds* of that which Men call by that *venerable Name*, is nothing else but a *Trick* to get Money. And the Holy Scriptures are like Original Deeds, by which any Man that has but a little more Wit than Honesty, may lay claim to an Ecclesiastical Possession.

But least I should be thought to speak irreverently of those Holy Books, I acknowledge, That if a man be sincere and honest, and look for Truth as if he had a mind to find it; and have no other ends in his Search, but to please his Maker and save his Soul; he may easily find enough to make him both happy *here* and *hereafter*. But as far as I can see, men seem to understand most of the Scriptures backward. For whereas the Prophet saith, *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what the Lord requireth of thee, to do Justice, and love Mercy, and to walk Humbly with thy God.* And the Apostle tells them, *That True Religion before God and the Father, consists in visiting the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep themselves unspotted from the World*; also another, *That they should follow Peace with all men, and Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*: By their Actions and Living, they seem to understand them clear contrary; as if it had been said thus, *He hath shewed thee, O man, what the Lord requireth of thee, to do Injustice, to love Persecution, and to walk at Enmity and Defiance with thy God.* True Religion before God and the Father is this, *To neglect the Fatherless, and afflict the Widows, and to conform themselves to the Fashions of the World; and follow Contention and Strife with all men, without which no man shall go to Heaven.* Truely men's Actions seems to favour this latter Interpretation, rather than the former. And many other places of Scripture I could quote, which exhort to Love and Peace, and mutual Condescen-

descention, which men either do not, or will not understand; and 'tis a deplorable thing to consider how *partial* they are in understanding the Scriptures. Some Texts are great *Favourites*, when they seem to countenance their Interest or Designs; and others that will not *Vote* for them, are cashier'd, and a hundred Objections raised against them. That of *Contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints*, I warrant you at *this time o'th' Day* is a precious one; for here peevish Nature is gratified, and here if I have a mind to keep any thing that is *dear* to me, I have a Cover for my Dish; 'tis but calling my Faction, my Passion, Humour, Prejudice, Interest, &c. by the Venerable Name of True Faith; and then I have a Commission to contend earnestly for it. *Contend earnestly with us for our Livings and Benefices, once deliver us by the Laws*, would not look well; *But Contend earnestly for the Faith*, that's plausible and goes down glib. I will readily allow the Objection which I see is ready to come upon me, that is, *That men are obliged in Conscience to contend for the Faith, or that which they think to be true*; yet this *Contention* ought not to proceed further than to *Edification*; and if any other Methods be used besides *calm Reasoning* and *Argument*, that destroy Charity, an *Indifference* is better than such Contention. And when men exhort their Auditory to *Contentions*; however innocent their Meaning and Intentions may be, yet their Discretion must be blamed, and they will never be able to clear themselves of publick Censure, if they do not qualifie their Discourse with all the Limitations and Restrictions imaginable; for men are too apt to *Contend* without Exhortation.

But to Conclude,

SINCE in so many Ages, no Humane Art or Industry, nor all the Powers on Earth together, by either Force or Stratagem, neither hitherto have found, nor hereafter can possibly find an Expedient, or make it possible, amidst so many various and all incompetent Mediums, *That all men should be of one Mind, or that they should not Disagree, not be Deceived, or not have Differences and Contentions; I say, since these things are impossible to be done,* (Salva veritate, *and allowing Liberty of Judgment*) *the Attempt is Vain and Foolish, and not to be prosecuted but by Fools or Mad Men. And since it is so, the next thing which naturally comes under Consideration is, How to make all things as Innocent and Easie, and Suitable to Government as possible. All which things His Gracious Majesty having duly Weighed and Considered; out of Great Experience, Deep Wisdom, and Princely Compassion towards His miserable contending Subjects, hath found out and pitched upon the only Expedient in order thereto. I mean a* Great Pacifick Charter, *which though it cannot subdue mens Ill Nature and Will, yet will put it out of the Power of any one Contending Party to hurt another. 'Tis this Instrument and only this, (with God's Blessing) can make our miserable Contending Nation Happy. And he either does not truly understand his Interest, or is no True* English-*Man, who doth not heartily desire it, and by all honest means endeavour to promote it. And I doubt not, maugre all the Opposition of Interested and Unreasonable Men, but that His Majesty will duly Effect it. The Almighty, all Good and Wise God, who put it in his Heart, no doubt but will assist him in it; and if so,* Gamaliel's *Advice is pertinent in the Case,* To strive against the Almighty, will be to no purpose; *They but in vain promise themselves success, against the* King of Heaven *and* Earth. *It seems to be an Honour and a Blessing reserved by Heaven on purpose for him; and is an Action and Performance truly worthy of so Judicious, so Just, & so Couragious a Prince; and will raise Him a Name, and a Monument, not to be Defaced by the Spight of Time, or Succession of Ages.*

FINIS.

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decision which men either do not, or will not

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